**The Disney Rules of Marketing**

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Living in Florida, there is one absolute, unchangeable point of reference in my life — Walt Disney World.

No matter where you go in the central part of this state, it’s hard to completely avoid the influence of that lovable mouse. Circumstance had me heading over to Disney for the first time in a few years today. On top of it being a great day trip, it gave me a chance to see a company that, for all its fault, has managed to do its brand marketing almost perfectly.

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**It’s A Small World After All**

**It’s not what you see, it’s what you don’t see.** In Disney, no matter how hard you look you’ll never see a piece of trash laying anywhere for more than five minutes. It’s not something you notice if you’re not paying attention, but when you go there you have a sense that you’ve entered a world that is just a little more clean and pure than the one you left.

Image management is not always about adding good features, it is just as important to remove the ones that detract from what you’re trying to convey.

**You don’t sell products, you sell an experience.** Walt Disney World has built its brand around a park filled with some of the most unremarkable rides I’ve ever run across. Other than tradition — why do I, someone many years outside of its target demographic, continue to care?

Simply put, they are very good at making people feel ***very good***. Every time I visit, they’ve cut a little time out of the lines, added just enough to an old attraction to make it worth seeing again, and placed enough “new” content in to give the old park a fresh coat of paint.

More than that, everything from the music, to the shows, to the cast’s well trained cheer, is designed to leave me feeling a little better about the world. That kind of Marketing is absolutely priceless.

**Learn to turn work into play.** This last point is one that product designers constantly overlook. There are certain “features” that we add to our offerings that frustrate users. Usually these are data entry tasks or other forms of manual labor that we weren’t creative enough to work out of the process. Instead of letting these hiccups slow adoption, we should take a lesson from the Mouse and learn to turn them into opportunities to add more value.

I would not doubt if a sizable chunk of Disney’s ride budget goes into line design. Between Fast Passes, expanding and shrinking the queue depending on demand and the range of audio and visual treats to keep bored customers chomping at the bit to get on, Disney (along with many other theme parks) have become masters of transforming one of the most tedious human activities (waiting) into something that is at least bearable, and sometimes even mildly entertaining.

If you work it out, most people spend 60 dollars for what amounts to 45 minutes (at best) of actual rides. The rest is expensed on some combination of waiting, walking and eating overpriced food. Yet, at the end of the day, everyone feels like every dime was well spent. That is branding.